



Equine News



Department of Animal Science
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

Spring 2013

Do spring rains mean we are going to have warm season pasture grass?

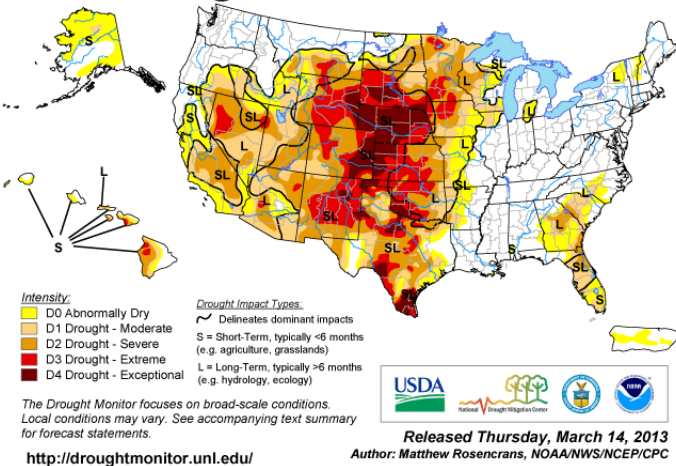
David W. Freeman

OSU Extension Equine Specialist

We can surely hope that the small changes in weather patterns this spring means that we will have growth of warm season pasture grasses later this year. The severity and scope of drought seems to have lessened somewhat in Oklahoma; however, recent monitoring shows most of the state is still in extreme, severe to moderate intensity of drought. A map indicated percentage of normal rainfall for the month of March shows most of the state has been well under the percentage of normal rainfall (<http://climate.ok.gov/data/public/mesonet/maps/daily/drought/last30dayspct.png>). Predictions for the next three months suggest about equal chances for above or below average rainfall. Soil moisture levels are still less than desired for plant growth, and surface water used for watering livestock are low.

U.S. Drought Monitor

March 12, 2013
Valid 7 a.m. EDT

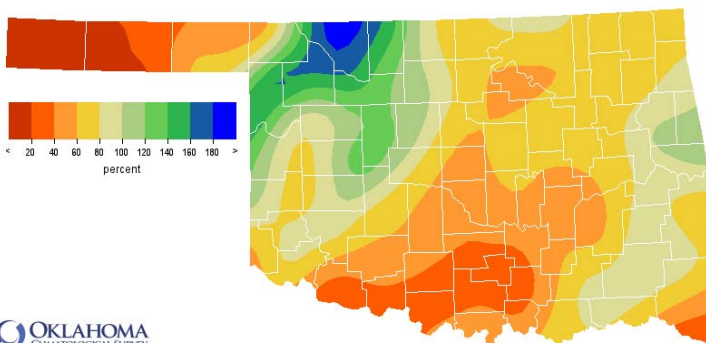


So, my take on it is that it is a little early to know what to expect. Following soil moisture levels, precipitation levels, and drought status will provide more information as April progresses toward the time of year we expect warm season grasses to grow. For those with an interest in such, you might bookmark the Oklahoma Mesonet site at <http://www.mesonet.org/index.php>.

In the meantime, maybe we can be optimistic so as to plan for pasture growth this year. If you have the 'normal' horse operation, spring rains will mean that weeds will start to proliferate. This may be especially true since many of our pastures have been severely overgrazed the last couple of years, even to the standards of 'normal' horse pastures which have a tendency to be overgrazed even in good years.

I'm already receiving calls requesting the best herbicide for horse pastures. That question can't be answered well over the phone, as weed specie, proliferation and timing of weed growth direct herbicide use and timing. Most herbicides contain a broadleaf control agent, i.e. 24-D. However, certain herbicides are indicated for use for certain weed species, and all herbicides have to be used at the correct time for effective control.

So, I'd relay questions on herbicide use to those in your locale with better knowledge of conditions, your County Cooperative Extension Agriculture Educator. Same goes for making decisions on fertilizer as timing, moisture, soil mineral content (soil test) and grass specie drive decisions on fertilization. I've had one person already tell me they are getting a jump on this year's pasture: He already put out fertilizer for warm season grass. I suppose the recent showers we have had made him jump a little early. I didn't have the heart to tell him at best he was feeding weeds for now, and the intents of helping warm season grasses were likely premature.



Percentage of Normal Rainfall
Last 30 Days

Feb 24, 2013 through Mar 25, 2013
Created 2013-03-26 10:02:37 UTC. Copyright © 2013

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Horse for Sale
David W. Freeman
OSU State Extension Equine Specialist

Setting a Horse Price

One way to break down what is behind a horse's sale price is to think of price to be a function of horse value and the current horse market. Each of these factors is in turn influenced by several conditions.

A horse's value can be divided into the individual's attribute: Genetics, the health of the horse, the phenotype or conformation, and the horse's ability. These conditions inter-relate, and one will influence or result from the effects of the others.



Genetics play a more important role in horses used for activities that have a high heritability estimate. For example, 'cow sense' as it relates to desired performance for exhibition and racing speed are two traits that are considered moderately to highly heritable. This means that when horses with these desired traits are mated, the offspring have a moderate to high degree of expectation to also exhibit these traits.

A horse's health also influences its value. Value is depressed when a horse is suspected to have a genetic disease, has an infectious disease or currently exhibiting disease conditions.

Conformation affects performance potential and the ability to withstand stress of use. Also, phenotypic defects such as leg deviations in growing horses will drop value. Finally, training, ability or potential ability affects value. A 'finished' horse that has evidence of performance and has the behavior and health to continue is obviously of more value than a like counterpart without training or evidence of performance. A final thought, age influences the value of potential. Race bred yearlings are bought on factors that provide security of their potential performance. A five year old race horse that hasn't been trained or proven will have a low probability of developing potential into performance; hence its value is decreased.



The horse market is influenced by many factors, i.e. there are expected correlations to horse price and economic indicators such as unemployment rate, disposable income, and consumer confidence. Markets for most products include some level of residual, salvage or base value. Gold jewelry has 'scrap value'. Brood cows have a market value for slaughter when they have no other productive value. Base prices are themselves influenced by factors such as supply and demand, laws, costs, and accessibility of markets.

As base value doesn't influence the price of horses as much as market animals, the horse market is driven more so by buyer interest. The number and individual level of interest is influenced by the buyer's thoughts on how well the horse aligns with their intended level and type of use and the buyer's thoughts on the current market price for such a horse.

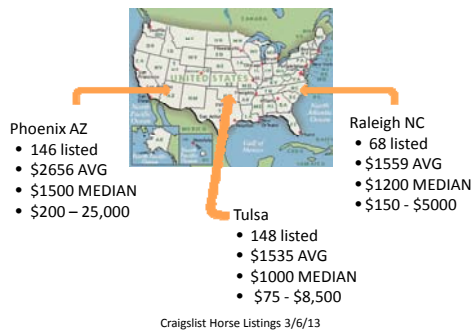
Researching Markets

Traditionally, we think of three outlets for sale of horses: the private treaty which is owner to owner transaction of an individual horse, the public sale handled by a sales commission company by and large open to all owners or the private sale of groups of horses that has the same format of public sales, but represents owner's stock or a group of owners collectively supplying stock. Private sales are backed by the individual owners, i.e. monies are generally paid directly to sellers rather than a sales commission company handling funds, guarantee of payment, etc. Traditionally, a private sale is usually a dispersal or production sale 'on farm', with any sales commission agents on site working for the seller.

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The advent of mass media outlet developed by the internet has taken these traditional markets into less categorical ways to sell horses. Now, sales have large outlets via internet-based sale sites with lists of horses for sale via private treaty, on-line public sales with bids submitted within defined periods of times that horses are offered, and the 'on farm' private sale is represented entirely via the internet, complete with video and live bid options via the internet while the auction is in progress.

Regardless of outlet, conditions of sale and consigner and buyer obligations should be stated and identified. For example, public sales will state conditions of sale, responsibilities of sellers and buyers, booking fees and a percentage of sale fee to be paid to the commission. With all sale outlets, guarantees or lack thereof should be expressed in writing rather than orally. For private treaty sales especially, conditions such as any trial time of ownership post sale should be discussed, return policies identified, and limits to buyer and seller responsibilities should be documented.



Knowing the history of prices of public sales help refine expectation of sales. It is a usual expectation that larger sale lots will bring attention of more buyers, as long as the numbers are by and large representative of horses with perceived value. Sales which specialize types of use and attracts horses of high levels of perceived value have intended consequence of heightening the interests of buyers. And, of course, information on past prices fetched will provide a basis for current value, especially rank of value with contemporary groups.

It is common for sale companies to include pictures and pedigree information of 'high sellers', which can provide you information on current sale trends and buyer interests. Other outlets may provide sale results for all horses, and with a small amount of effort, you can categorize horse prices into categories and run simple statistics that provide averages and median price. An average price is determined by summing all the prices and dividing by the number of horses. Median price is the price that separates the higher half of the sample from the lower half.

Research on horse markets go well beyond simple statistics. Sale agencies, sale agents, bloodstock agencies, and others conduct in-depth procedures to identify the type and degree of influence of factors on price. Research projects conducted on horse price prediction and evaluation using Hedonic Price methods show many factors influence the price of horses. These models can be used for price prediction of future markets.



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Presentation for Market

A final point of discussion on sale of horses is presentation guidelines for marketing a horse. This includes efforts to best represent the horse for sale and to represent the need for a buyer to purchase a specific horse.

Too much can be stated as to the lack of effort most make to best represent a horse for sale. While we wouldn't consider offering a car for sale without a wash and wax, many assume buyers to look through dirty, untrimmed, poorly groomed horses.

For example, visuals, both photographic and video, will paint a definite picture on a buyers mind. Expecting the buyer to look past errors in visual presentation is not acceptable. Narratives are important, yet tricky. Research on sale pricing determinants can bring out interesting trends. For example, in one study the word 'nice' in sale catalog descriptions actually was associated with a price decrease, whereas 'finished' was associated with a positive impact on price. Clear, concisely stated narratives aligning a horse's value to buyer's need will help decrease distraction and increase buyer interest.

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There are also several sale techniques that agents conduct to insure that distractions to the horse and distraction of the horse's condition do not lessen buyer interest. Cleanliness of surroundings, dress of handlers, and insulation of 'on site' distractions improve buyer perception. Dialog that allows buyers to state their preferences and intents, to feel valued by the seller and focuses the horse's characteristics to the buyers intents improve interests. Also, a horse cannot demonstrate what it doesn't have, so demonstration of handling and training should be restricted to the horse's ability, regardless of buyer insisting demonstration otherwise. For example, if a buyer wants to see if a horse can change leads, and the horse's progress hasn't achieved that task prior, it is best to decline the attempt with a dialog of why.

Representing the horse to the need of the buyer is an essential component of presentation. The need of the buyer is best determined by listening to the buyer rather than speaking for the buyer during the transaction. For long term relationship, buyer satisfaction and seller's service after the sale should be considered and defined during the transaction, and horses should be represented fairly and accurately.

Conditions of post sale responsibilities must enter into the conversation at the correct time of negotiations, which are best identified with written record rather than oral contracts. And, sellers enter into a relationship with a buyer at time of sale. The length of relationship and reputation of the seller depends on how well the negotiation proceeded and follow up after the sale.

Part of this negotiation is the seller's ability to accurately represent the need for purchase. To do so, the buyer will expect the seller to be knowledgeable about the part of the industry or intended use that the horse represents. And to sum it up, the objective of a seller to have a product that supplies a demand, not developing a product that demands the supply. An unusable product can't demand a market.

[Several short article fact sheets on horse management and production are available on-line and through your Oklahoma Cooperative Extension County educators. You can access horse-related fact sheets from www.ansi.okstate.edu/e-equine . In addition, you will find similar articles on related topics such as forage production and health within the on-line library of OSU Facts and available through your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educator.]

A directory of county Oklahoma Cooperative Extension offices is available on-line: <http://www.dasnr.okstate.edu/extension> Offices have County Extension Educators working in areas of Agriculture, 4-H and Youth Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

Also, a nationally developed Cooperative Extension website developed for horse owner education is available for all to use. Several articles, learning lessons, and on-line video presentations are available at www.extension.org/horses .